

# BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

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**W**e as Pittsburghers need to be in environments where we get to know each other across racial and socio-economic lines. Human beings tend to gather around people they're comfortable with, whether that's people who make the same amount of money, or people who kind of look like them and think like them.

With the increased political and racial tension over the last couple of years, I think making an effort to increase unity across differences is more important than ever. To accomplish this, you just need to get to know people. And that's hard to do, because we all run around in our little bubbles. I've personally experienced that unity at Eastminster Church. Its tagline includes the description "a cross-cultural church," so for the last 15 years, I've been part of that unity—getting to know a wide variety of people, along with saying stupid stuff and hurting each other's feelings, and then apologizing.

I guess at the end of the day I believe "we" is built on relationships. That might be in the faith community, the school community or the neighborhood. We certainly like to think that our work with East Liberty Development Inc.'s Circles program is part of that equation as well. We do "we."

In Circles, we are very intentionally creating an environment to have conversations so people get to know each other, and can talk very honestly and bluntly about race and its impact in Pittsburgh. We also talk about the psychology of poverty, generational poverty and the PTSD that can result from poverty.

They're very often very hard conversations to have, but we don't feel like we can have genuine relationships unless we really tackle some of these kinds of tougher issues.

— Interviewed by Elwin Green